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African Swine Fever Continues to Threaten Romanian Hog Farmers

Report Categories:

Pest/Disease Occurrences

Livestock and Products

Approved By:

Jonn Slette

Prepared By:

Monica Dobrescu

Report Highlights:

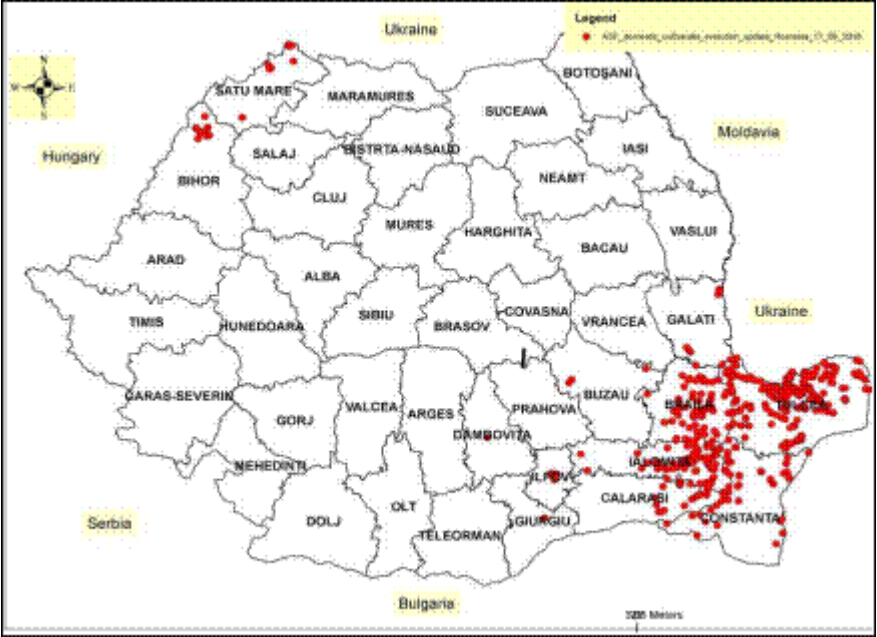
From July 2017 through early October 2018, Romania's National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA) confirmed nearly 1,000 African swine fever (ASF) cases, including 15 in commercial holdings. To date, approximately 350,000 pigs have been culled under ongoing disease control and eradication measures, 80 percent of which were from commercial farms. Swine movements are restricted as per regulations, which has generated additional concerns for domestic hog farmers. Fearing a potential risk of export interdiction or additional scrutiny, market operators are increasingly substituting domestic pork with imported raw materials.

General Information:

Status Update: ASF in Romania

Over the past three months, the NSVFSA has confirmed ASF cases in Romania’s northwestern region in backyard holdings and/or wild boars, as well as in the southeastern region in backyard holdings, wild boars, and commercial farms. As of October 2018, about 980 ASF outbreaks have been confirmed in 13 counties (see Map 1). To date, about \$16 million from Romania’s national budget has been disbursed to nearly 6,000 pig owners to compensate for their losses.

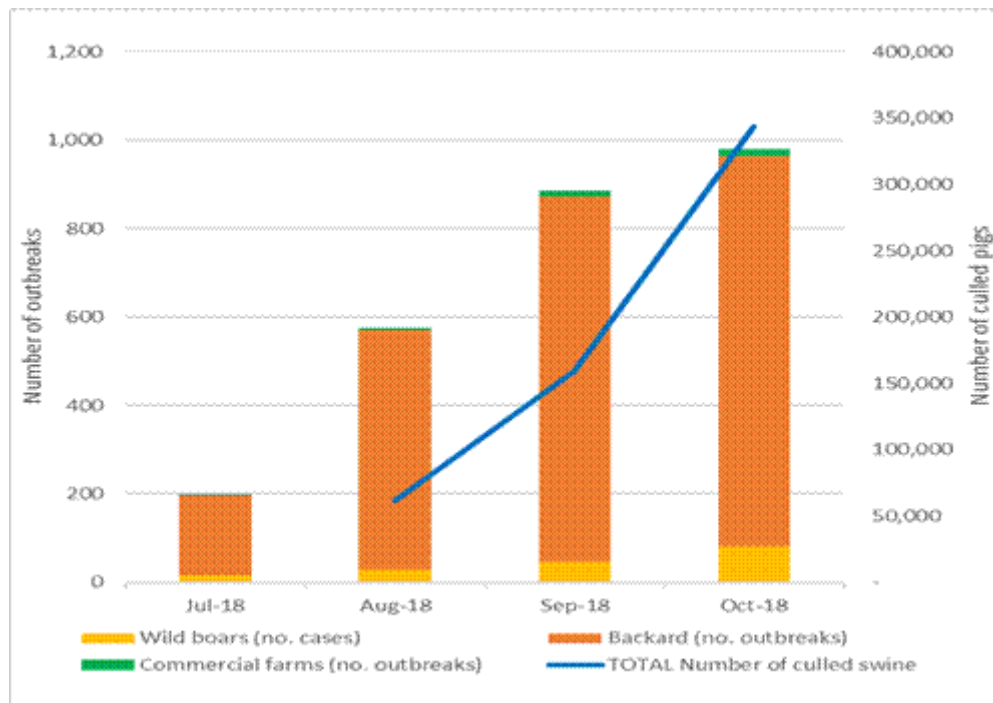
Map 1: African Swine Fever Outbreaks locations



Source: DG Health and Food Safety/ NSVFSA update September 17, 2018

Romania implemented provisions under [EU Directive 2002/60](#) to control ASF. Despite these measures, the situation worsened during late summer, from fewer than 200 reported cases in July 2018, to 574 cases in August, and 885 in September 2018. To date, Government of Romania (GOR) authorities have culled nearly 350,000 pigs (see Chart 1) as part of its disease control measures, approximately seven percent of total slaughter in 2017 (4.9 million heads). The mobile incinerators used for carcass disposal are vastly inadequate vis-à-vis the scale of the losses, prompting authorities to switch to carcass burial. So far only about three percent of culled carcasses have been incinerated, while 97 percent have been buried, raising concerns among civil society groups about potential environmental impacts.

Chart 1: Number of Cases and Culled Pigs (July-October 2018)



Source: Romanian Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority; Note: Cumulative figures

A vertically integrated company in southeastern Romania was able to resume hog slaughter in one plant approximately eight weeks after the virus was detected in the same company's hog production operation. The company is planning to source hogs for its slaughter operation from other EU member states to avoid infection. Farms that previously supplied the company are no longer raising hogs.

The number of confirmed cases and the speed which the virus has spread have put significant pressure on government officials. Some stakeholders have publically criticized local and GOR authorities for gaps in coordination. Trust between government officials and rural communities has also been an issue, as some people have denied GOR vets access to their swine herd, or slaughtered their pigs before the veterinarians arrived. Since then, public awareness campaigns regarding biosecurity requirements have intensified.

Likely Sources of the Virus

According to the NSVFSA, border crossings by wild boars at the Romania-Ukraine border, as well as illegal meat trade are the most likely vectors of ASF in Romania. In southeastern Romania, wild boars in the Danube Delta near the border are protected from hunting and are identified as the likely origin of the disease and probable vectors for domestic pigs. Human factors such as vehicle movements, contaminated food, and livestock feed are also likely contributors, particularly to back-yard holdings and commercial farms.

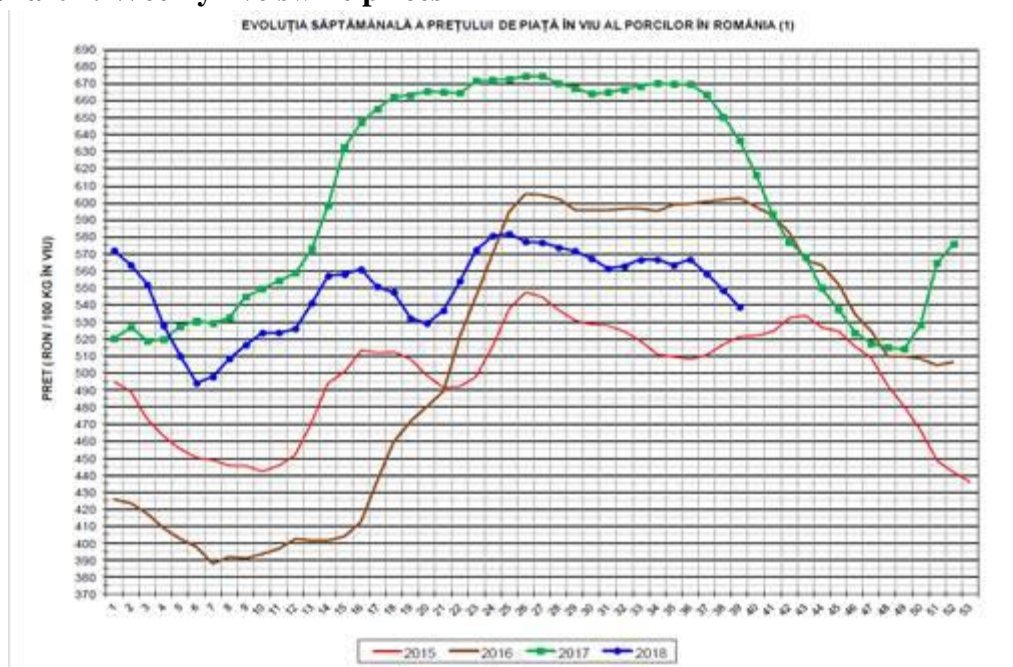
Regarding wild boars, the GOR approved in early August a decision to allow expanded hunting of wild boars and other species, particularly in the areas where ASF was present.

Live Swine and Pork Markets

Romania's hog population is projected to decline from 2017, as backyard holdings are reduced and

farmers are more cautious. In mid-2018, live-swine prices dropped as many backyard holders began to sell their pigs due to ASF fears. Data report that live-swine prices in September 2018 for commercial operators was 17 percent below prices in September 2017 (see Chart 2). Despite the current sell-off, live-swine prices should rebound over the long term, as movement restrictions and lower supplies will spur live-piglet and meat imports. In the same time, commercial farms located in the risk-free areas remain committed to their investment plans, so the increases in the other geographic regions alleviate the negative market impact of the veterinary measures implemented in the affected areas.

Chart 2: Weekly live swine prices



Source: CCC Europ (Carcass Grading Commission)

Since the first ASF detection, the Romanian pork industry has frequently expressed its concerns regarding measures taken by the GOR. In a joint effort aimed at limiting the virus, the pork industry recommended a series of measures: prohibiting any pigs not raised on backyards or non-commercial farms (e.g. pastures, forests, etc.); prohibit slaughter from non-commercial operations that cannot provide traceability documents in slaughter plants; register all pigs from non-commercial farms in the National Animal Registry; approve a series of measures to prohibit the freedom of movement for pigs and for voluntary pigs culling in high-risk areas; ensure GOR support for commercial farms in the areas listed under Annex III of the [EU Decision 709/2014](#), so that economic losses can be avoided as much as possible; and cull all pigs from non-commercial farms within the protection area and all pigs found in open areas. Industry leaders also advocate for culling all backyard pigs raised within a 10 km of commercial operations.

Trade Impact

Romania implemented the EU regionalization legislation under [EU Decision 709/2014](#) as a means to control ASF. The applied restrictions are likely to negatively affect Romania's balance of trade for live piglets and pork meat. Many large hog operations and slaughter plants have switched to other EU suppliers or domestic suppliers from ASF-free areas. Pork processors fear that even if at the purchasing

moment the pigs they purchased were healthy, products may become ineligible to be exported to other EU markets if the virus is detected at a supplying farm.

Import data for July-September 2018 is still not available, although Post expects that pork imports will increase. During the first six months of 2018, Romania imported about 18 percent more pork meat and products over the corresponding timeframe in 2017 (Table 1).

Since mid-2017 following Romania's initial detection and notification of ASF, Romania lost market access to China. Although Romania continues to ship pork meat within the EU, the volumes notably dropped, particularly to the UK, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, and Spain. This reduction may be explained by the lower domestic supply and the reluctance by traders in these countries vis-a-vis Romanian pork.

Overall pork meat exports dropped by 41 percent during the first half of 2018 as compared to the same period in 2017 (Table 2).

Table 1: Romania pork meat imports

Romania Import Statistics								
Commodity: Pork, Carcass-weight Equivalency								
Annual Series: 2013 - 2017, Year To Date: 06/2017 & 06/2018								
Quantity								
Partner Country	Unit					Year To Date		
		2014	2015	2016	2017	06/2017	06/2018	%Change
World, of which selected countries	T	174,801	199,662	206,517	245,098	101,380	119,816	18.18
Germany	T	59,863	65,982	54,068	68,923	29,219	32,640	11.71
Spain	T	18,291	25,966	43,383	48,737	21,040	27,891	32.56
Hungary	T	29,241	33,024	32,636	36,783	15,432	18,578	20.39
Netherlands	T	18,984	22,286	20,538	25,013	9,087	10,778	18.62
Poland	T	11,687	14,705	14,745	22,076	8,213	10,166	23.78
Denmark	T	6,707	8,886	6,455	9,899	4,011	4,744	18.28
Italy	T	4,168	4,093	8,951	7,508	4,018	3,416	-14.99
Belgium	T	8,829	9,029	5,985	7,364	1,818	3,174	74.61
Austria	T	7,306	5,763	7,571	6,393	3,178	3,058	-3.75
France	T	6,108	4,725	4,508	3,918	1,581	1,677	6.06
Estonia	T	650	1,623	2,895	2,750	1,365	703	-48.52

Source: Global Trade Atlas

Table 2: Romania pork meat exports

<p align="center">Romania Export Statistics Commodity: Pork, Carcass-weight Equivalency Annual Series: 2013 - 2017, Year To Date: 06/2017 & 06/2018</p>

Quantity								
Partner Country	Unit					Year To Date		
		2014	2015	2016	2017	06/2017	06/2018	%Change
World, of which selected countries	T	24,004	24,001	36,131	38,898	22,909	13,448	-41.3
China	T	676	1,119	9,378	8,494	7,698	197	-97.44
Bulgaria	T	4,544	3,301	5,200	7,326	4,051	2,313	-42.89
Spain	T	1,027	2,723	3,710	3,682	1,980	1,585	-19.92
Greece	T	2,109	2,334	2,066	3,555	1,594	1,489	-6.57
Hungary	T	4,821	3,266	4,365	2,815	1,303	1,786	37.05
Italy	T	1,530	859	1,375	1,696	823	839	2.01
United Kingdom	T	510	652	1,337	1,547	990	461	-53.46
Moldova	T	146	465	671	1,484	668	591	-11.46
Netherlands	T	1,324	2,068	1,707	1,407	630	434	-31.03
Germany	T	552	904	1,278	953	561	399	-28.78
Belgium	T	137	85	117	895	321	508	58.32

Source: Global Trade Atlas